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KitNewCare: Pioneering Transformation in Kidney Healthcare Sustainability Across Europe

A new EU-funded project – KitNewCare – aims to help health and care systems better embrace environmental sustainability and climate-neutrality, with a focus on kidney care. The project runs from January 2024 to December 2027.

At the heart of this initiative is a pressing issue: healthcare systems are significant contributors to carbon emissions, accounting for approximately 5-11% of the total at global level. Within this context, kidney care emerges as an ideal candidate for systemic change due to its substantial disease burden, resource footprint and well-defined care pathways and ecosystem.

KitNewCare tackles the challenge head-on, identifying and addressing the major health, environmental, financial, and social hotspots in healthcare. The project goes beyond the traditional focus on building energy use – where carbon reduction has been historically concentrated – targeting the broader aspects of products, services and pathways that form a significant part of the carbon footprint. The project employs a systematic approach to pilot and benchmark interventions, holistically assessing their effectiveness, and aligning with major EU initiatives which call for the development, implementation, and upscaling of sustainable solutions throughout the healthcare landscape.

"The KitNewCare project represents a pivotal step towards aligning kidney care with sustainable healthcare goals, both at national level and in line with the EU Green Deal's objectives," stated Brett Duane, Project Coordinator and Principal Investigator at Trinity College Dublin. "Our vision is to revolutionise healthcare practices by introducing sustainable technologies and methodologies that minimise environmental impact without compromising patient care. By embedding social responsibility and environmental consciousness into our work, we aim not only to improve patient outcomes but also pave the way for a more sustainable healthcare sector. We believe that KitNewCare, with the expertise of our European partners, will serve as a beacon of sustainability, inspiring others to adopt sustainable practices and foster a greener healthcare future."

A key element of KitNewCare's approach is the involvement of a range of stakeholders – including patients, healthcare professionals, NGOs, industry partners, and policymakers. Integral to this approach is the development of training and capacity-building materials, as well as policy briefs and recommendations. The former aims at providing training in sustainable skills to different health and care professionals across the EU. The latter will provide guidelines to support ongoing and future policy strategies and agendas to decarbonise the EU healthcare system.

Furthermore, the establishment of a Sustainability Network will ensure the implementation and upscaling of the project's innovative approaches beyond its duration. The project commits to establishing evidence-based governance mechanisms, supported by life cycle assessments (LCAs), providing healthcare professionals tools for benchmarking and measuring sustainability improvements.

Ultimately, KitNewCare aspires to set new standards in kidney care – delivering high-quality, cost-effective, accessible, and sustainable solutions, including technical innovations. The project's end vision extends beyond kidney care, aiming to influence other medical fields and contribute to a more sustainable future for the entire healthcare system.

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